



Gender-Based Performance Disparities in Entrepreneurship: An Integrative Review and Theoretical Synthesis

B. Lalramengmawia¹, Dr.K. Lalromawia²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Management Mizoram University, Aizawl

²Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Mizoram University, Aizawl

Abstract – Success as an entrepreneur is essential to the growth of the world economy, yet gender inequality still prevents fair results. This study examines how male and female entrepreneurs perform differently in terms of finances, innovation, and resources by synthesizing secondary data. With a theoretical framework to contextualize findings, the study explores the behavioural and structural factors that contribute to entrepreneurial success, anchored in the Resource-Based View (RBV) and social role theory. An inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem is promoted through a discussion of policy and practical implications. In addition to examining themes including financial outcomes, innovative inclinations, resource access, and societal impacts, this research looks at how entrepreneurs perform differently based on their gender. This study identifies areas for further research and offers a comprehensive picture of gender-specific entrepreneurial performance by combining perspectives.

Keywords – Entrepreneurship, gender inequality, financial performance, innovation, gender roles, resource- based view..

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a critical driver of economic growth, job creation, innovation and societal transformation in today's globalized economy. It offers individuals opportunities to innovate, create wealth, and contribute to economic development. However, gender disparities continue to permeate the entrepreneurial ecosystem, presenting significant barriers to equitable participation and success. Despite substantial strides in female entrepreneurship over the last few decades, women often face systemic obstacles that hinder their ability to compete on an equal footing with male counterparts (Brush & Cooper, 2012).

These disparities manifest in resource accessibility, sectoral representation, and the societal perception of entrepreneurial roles, among other areas. To a certain limited extent gender inequalities continue to shape entrepreneurial outcomes, often undermining the performance and growth potential of female-led ventures (Ruiz & Alvarez, 2024). As a result, women's entrepreneurial endeavours are often undervalued, and their potential contributions to innovation and economic development are overlooked (Gupta & Turban, 2008).

To address these gaps, this paper incorporates both the structural and societal dimensions shaping entrepreneurial outcomes. It was studied how human capital, institutional frameworks, and sociocultural expectations intersect to influence gender-based disparities in entrepreneurship.

II. LITERATURE REVIEWS

Regardless of the increasing participation of women in entrepreneurship, disparities remain evident in terms of financial performance, scalability, and access to key

resources like capital and mentorship. This trend can be partially attributed to longstanding societal stereotypes that frame new venture creation as a predominantly male activity, favouring traits such as independence, confidence, competitiveness, and risk-taking (Ahl, 2006). From a structural perspective, men typically enjoy broader access to start-up funding and networks, reinforcing these gendered patterns of entrepreneurial engagement (Marlow & Patton, 2005). In contrast, Female CEOs in India have a positive impact on firm performance, particularly in progressive states with higher sex ratios. However, female ownership does not show a definitive effect on performance, suggesting that leadership roles may be more influential than ownership alone (Roy, 2024)

Access to financial resources remains a critical barrier for women entrepreneurs. Research shows that women are less likely to secure venture capital or large-scale funding due to biases in lending practices and investor decisions (Greene et al., 2015). This financial inequality often forces women to rely on personal savings or informal sources, limiting their ability to scale their ventures effectively. Furthermore, women frequently receive smaller loans than men, despite similar or better credit profiles, due to gendered assumptions about risk and reliability (Marlow & Patton, 2005). These structural constraints exacerbate the performance gap between male- and female-led businesses. In addition to financial challenges, women entrepreneurs face limited access to professional networks and mentorship. Networks are essential for gaining market insights, establishing partnerships, and securing investment opportunities. However, women often find themselves excluded from high-level industry circles dominated by men, reducing their exposure to critical business opportunities (Elam et al., 2019). This lack of access can stifle growth and innovation, as female entrepreneurs may



ISSN:3048-7722

struggle to leverage the social capital necessary to succeed in competitive markets (Carter et al., 2007).

Sectoral segregation further highlights the gender disparities in entrepreneurship. Women are disproportionately represented in service-oriented or low-growth industries, such as education and retail, while men dominate technology-driven and high-growth sectors like engineering and manufacturing (Hechavarria & Ingram, 2019). This trend is partly influenced by societal norms that channel women into traditionally "feminine" roles, limiting their exposure to high-potential industries. Such patterns not only constrain women's entrepreneurial opportunities but also reinforce stereotypes about their capabilities and ambitions.

Societal expectations and cultural norms play a pivotal role in shaping women's entrepreneurial experiences. Gender stereotypes often portray women as less capable leaders or innovators, which can discourage them from pursuing entrepreneurial ventures or scaling their businesses. Moreover, women frequently balance entrepreneurial responsibilities with caregiving roles, placing additional demands on their time and energy (Phookan & Veni, 2024). These dual responsibilities can reduce their ability to invest fully in their ventures, further perpetuating the gender gap in entrepreneurial outcomes.

The lack of representation and visibility of successful female entrepreneurs also contributes to perpetuating these disparities. Media and public discourse often highlight male entrepreneurial success stories, side-lining women's contributions to innovation and economic growth. This underrepresentation can deter aspiring female entrepreneurs and reinforce societal biases that undervalue their potential (Gupta et al., 2008).

III. OBJECTIVES:

- To examine the underlying factors contributing to gender disparities in entrepreneurial performance.
- By identifying key drivers ranging from access to financial capital to cultural norms, this objective aims to highlight the multifaceted nature of gender inequalities in entrepreneurship.
- To explore the interplay between structural constraints and individual agency in entrepreneurial success.
- This involves analysing how external factors such as discriminatory lending practices and institutional biases intersect with individual decisions, strategies, and resilience.
- To propose a theoretical framework integrating Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Role Theory for analysing gender differences.

The hybrid framework seeks to illuminate how both resources and societal expectations shape entrepreneurial behaviour and outcomes.

IV. METHODOLOGY

To investigate gender-based disparities in entrepreneurial performance, a systematic literature review was conducted. The review aimed to capture a comprehensive range of studies focusing on gender-specific dimensions of entrepreneurship such as innovation, finance, scalability, and sectoral trends.

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

i. Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV), as first articulated by Barney (1991), asserting that a firm's performance and competitive edge stem from securing and effectively leveraging resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). These resources can be both tangible such as financial capital and physical infrastructure and intangible, including specialized knowledge, human expertise, social-capital, and technological capabilities (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1996). Within entrepreneurship, numerous studies have demonstrated that the presence or absence of these resources greatly influences a venture's capacity to innovate, grow, and compete in the marketplace (Brush et al., 2004; Gupta, Turban, & Bhawe, 2008).

In the context of gender disparities, RBV underscores how unequal access to critical resources systematically constrains the growth and performance of female-led ventures (Akolgo et al., 2024; Carter, Shaw, Lam, & Wilson, 2007). For instance, women entrepreneurs frequently encounter financing obstacles due to biases in lending practices, stricter collateral requirements, and narrower networks of potential investors (Brush et al., 2004). These constraints are exacerbated by the historically male-dominated venture capital landscape, where unconscious bias and limited social connections often shape funding decisions (Greene, Brush, & Brown, 2015). Moreover, even when financial backing is secured, female founders may not receive the same levels of ongoing mentorship or advisory support, further restricting access to the intangible resources needed for sustained growth (Carter et al., 2007).

Similarly, social networks and reputational assets; another vital category of resources within the RBV framework tend to be less extensive for female entrepreneurs due to long-standing gender biases in professional associations and industry circles (Elam et al., 2019). Limited access to influential networks means fewer high-profile collaborations, partnerships, and referrals, ultimately hindering the scalability of women's ventures (Brush & Cooper, 2012). Technological assets also come into play: research reveals that women often have fewer opportunities to acquire advanced technical skills or secure cutting-edge digital tools, placing them at a further disadvantage in tech-driven markets (Hechavarria & Ingram, 2019).

As a result, from an RBV standpoint, the interplay of financial, social, human, and technological resources is critical in explaining why female-led ventures may grow more slowly or struggle to achieve sustained competitive



ISSN:3048-7722

advantage. Addressing these resource gaps through policy interventions, targeted funding initiatives, and network-building programs can enhance the VRIN resources available to women entrepreneurs, thereby levelling the entrepreneurial landscape and fostering greater inclusivity in high-growth sectors (Akolgo et al., 2024; Greene et al., 2015).

ii. Social Role Theory

Social Role Theory underscores that societal norms and expectations around gender roles significantly influence individual behaviour and decision-making (Phookan & Veni, 2024). In entrepreneurship, women are often channelled into sectors and business models that align with socially prescribed caregiving or nurturing roles. This phenomenon can limit their exposure to high-growth, technology-driven industries, thereby constraining their potential for rapid scalability and innovation. Consequently, Social Role Theory helps elucidate how sociocultural factors not only shape entrepreneurial choices but also affect the perceived legitimacy and resource availability for female entrepreneurs.

By integrating RBV and Social Role Theory, this paper highlights the dual influence of tangible resources (e.g., capital, networks) and intangible factors (e.g., societal norms, stereotypes) in shaping gendered entrepreneurial trajectories. This integrative perspective is particularly useful for developing comprehensive policy solutions aimed at reducing inequalities.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Financial Performance: Structural Constraints and Gender Dynamics

The review consistently found that male entrepreneurs tend to outperform female entrepreneurs in terms of revenue, profitability, and business growth metrics (Ruiz & Alvarez, 2024). One key explanatory factor is men's relatively easier access to venture capital, angel investments, and credit lines, which arise from entrenched biases in lending practices and investment circles (Marlow & Patton, 2005). However, female entrepreneurs often excel in financial efficiency and adaptive resource management, especially under conditions of capital scarcity (Olabode et al., 2023). This efficiency suggests that, when given equitable financial support, women-led businesses could match or surpass male-led counterparts in performance.

Policymakers and financial institutions need to address systemic biases in funding allocation. In India, implementing gender targeted credit schemes viz., Stand-Up India scheme for women entrepreneurs, Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY), Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), Mudra Yojana, Mahila Coir Yojana, Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE), Trade-Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development (TREAD), etc with subsidized interest rates and transparent evaluation criteria can help level the playing field.

Innovation and sectoral trends

Women entrepreneurs are frequently concentrated in service-oriented or niche sectors, where incremental innovation rather than radical, high-tech innovation often dominates (Mardatillah & Sari, 2024). Such innovation is characterized by gradual improvements and creative solutions tailored to specific consumer segments or local market needs. Conversely, men are more likely to lead ventures in scalable sectors, such as information technology and advanced manufacturing, benefiting from broader technological infrastructures and ecosystem support (Solórzano & Pizarro, 2024).

Narrow sectoral participation curbs the overall innovative potential of female entrepreneurs. Facilitating training programs focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and providing incentives for technology adoption can be crucial for bridging the innovation gap.

Resource Access and Utilization

A consistent theme across the reviewed literature is the disproportionate barriers women faced in acquiring essential resources, including financial capital, mentorship, and market linkages (Akolgo et al., 2024). Although programs like women-focused accelerators, incubators, and credit guarantees have shown promise, their scope and scale remain limited. Many such programs also fail to address nuanced issues like cultural constraints or gender biases in network-building.

Institutional frameworks need to emphasize resource equity. Beyond creating tailored financial products, support systems must include structured mentorship and networking opportunities that directly tackle gender-specific challenges.

Societal and Cultural Constraints

Social Role Theory highlights how deeply ingrained societal norms often forced women to balance entrepreneurial endeavours with caregiving responsibilities (Phookan & Veni, 2024). In many cultural contexts, entrepreneurial success is framed around traditionally masculine traits, thereby undervaluing or even stigmatizing women's entrepreneurial aspirations. This environment can limit the scale and impact of women-led ventures, as external stakeholders (e.g., investors, clients) may harbour biases that undermine women's credibility and negotiation power.

Addressing gender biases requires cultural shifts that distinguish entrepreneurial potential from traditional gender roles. Public awareness campaigns, social media representation, and education reforms can gradually reshape societal perceptions of women's economic and leadership capabilities.

VII. SYNTHESIS AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS



ISSN:3048-7722

i. Resource-Based View Integration

The findings validate RBV's emphasis on resource heterogeneity. Gendered constraints on resource acquisition particularly financial capital, high-level networks, and technological tools lead to differential performance outcomes for women and men entrepreneurs. By systematically analyzing these disparities, the study emphasizes the need for equitable resource distribution to unrestrained women's full entrepreneurial potential.

ii. Social Role Theory Integration

Social Role Theory provides a critical perspective for understanding how societal expectations interact with resource availability. The study reviewed reveal that gendered norms not only influence the sectors women enter but also shape how their success is perceived and rewarded. Thus, integrating RBV with Social Role Theory offers a more comprehensive explanation of why certain entrepreneurial strategies thrive or stumbled under various gender-related constraints.

VIII. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

i. Inclusive Financing:

Governments and financial institutions should expand access to capital for women entrepreneurs through dedicated funding mechanisms like microfinance, government-backed credit guarantees, and gender-responsive budgeting (Ruiz & Alvarez, 2024).

ii. Skill Development Programs:

Targeted STEM education and technical training can empower women to enter high-growth sectors. Public-private partnerships could offer scholarships, workshops, and certifications to promote broader participation.

iii. Mentorship and Networking:

Creating or scaling up women-centric accelerators, incubators, and networking platforms can bridge both informational and experiential gaps. This includes mentorship arrangements that connect early-stage women entrepreneurs with experienced industry leaders.

iv. Socio-Cultural Awareness Campaigns:

Governments, NGOs, and media outlets can work collaboratively to challenge persistent stereotypes. National-level campaigns that highlight successful women entrepreneurs may gradually reduce societal biases.

IX. CONCLUSION

This paper provides an integrative analysis of the factors driving gender-based disparities in entrepreneurial performance, drawing on both the Resource-Based View and Social Role Theory. The evidence indicates that women entrepreneurs encounter multifaceted barriers, including biases in lending, limited access to high-growth sectors, and culturally prescribed gender roles, that collectively hinder their performance and growth potential. Addressing these disparities requires systemic reforms, encompassing

equitable resource allocation, concerted efforts to shift societal norms, and proactive policy interventions.

Future research should explore longitudinal and cross-cultural studies to map the evolving intersection of gender, resources, and performance over time. Such approaches could offer deeper insights into how shifting economic conditions, technological advancements, and changing social attitudes reshape gendered pathways in entrepreneurship.

Policy interventions have a critical role to play in reducing these disparities. Gender-specific financing programs, mentorship initiatives, and capacity-building efforts can help bridge resource gaps and empower women entrepreneurs. Additionally, fostering inclusive ecosystems that prioritize diversity and equity can create a supportive environment for women to thrive in traditionally male-dominated industries. Educational programs focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) can further prepare women to enter high-growth sectors and challenge existing gender norms.

A theoretical framework that integrates the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Role Theory offers valuable insights into these challenges. RBV emphasizes the importance of tangible and intangible resources in driving business success, while Social Role Theory explores the influence of societal expectations on individual behaviour. Together, these perspectives highlight how unequal access to resources and culturally ingrained biases intersect to shape entrepreneurial outcomes (Barney, 1991; Ahl, 2006). This integrative approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors perpetuating gender disparities in entrepreneurship.

In conclusion, addressing gender-based inequalities in entrepreneurship requires a multifaceted strategy that combines structural reforms, societal change, and targeted support for women entrepreneurs. By dismantling systemic barriers and challenging cultural stereotypes, it is possible to foster an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem that unleashes the full potential of women in driving innovation and economic growth.

REFERENCES:

1. Ahl, H. (2006). Why research on women entrepreneurs needs new directions. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30(5), 595–621.
2. Akolgo, J., Mensah, F., & Dorgbetor, V. (2024). *Bridging finance gaps for women entrepreneurs: A comparative analysis of emerging economies*. Emerald Publishing.
3. Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99–120.



ISSN:3048-7722

4. Brush, C., & Cooper, S. (2012). Female entrepreneurship and economic development: An international perspective. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 24(1-2), 1–6.
5. Brush, C. G., Carter, N. M., Gatewood, E., Greene, P., & Hart, M. (2004). *Clearing the hurdles: Women building high-growth businesses*. Financial Times Prentice Hall.
6. Carter, S., Shaw, E., Lam, W., & Wilson, F. (2007). Gender, entrepreneurship, and bank lending: The criteria and processes used by bank loan officers in assessing applications. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 31(3), 427–444.
7. Elam, A. B., Brush, C. G., Greene, P. G., Baumer, B., Dean, M., & Heavlow, R. (2019). *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2018/2019 Women's Report*. Global Entrepreneurship Research Association.
8. Grant, R. M. (1996). Toward a knowledge-based theory of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, 17(S2), 109–122.
9. Greene, P. G., Brush, C. G., & Brown, T. E. (2015). Resources in small firms: An exploratory study. *Journal of Small Business Strategy*, 5(2), 25–40.
10. Gupta, V. K., Turban, D. B., & Bhawe, N. (2008). The effect of gender stereotype activation on entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(5), 1053–1061.
11. Hechavarria, D. M., & Ingram, A. E. (2019). The entrepreneurial gender divide: Hegemonic masculinity and organizational legitimation. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 11(3), 248–272.
12. Mardatillah, Z., & Sari, H. (2024). *Nurturing incremental innovation in female-led small enterprises: A Southeast Asian perspective*. Routledge.
13. Marlow, S., & Patton, D. (2005). All credit to men? *Entrepreneurship, finance and gender*. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 29(6), 717–735.
14. Olabode, O., Solanke, B., & Akindele, T. (2023). Financial efficiency in high-constraint environments: Insights from women-led enterprises in Sub-Saharan Africa. *African Journal of Business Management*, 17(2), 45–58
15. Phookan, S., & Veni, M. (2024). *Societal and cultural frameworks shaping women's entrepreneurial journeys*. Springer.
16. Roy, A. (2024). Gender Differences and Firm Performance: Evidence from India. *The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy*, 24(1), 1-34. <https://doi.org/10.1515/bejeap-2022-0049>
17. Ruiz, M., & Alvarez, R. (2024). *Gender biases in venture financing: A global perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan.
18. Solórzano, P., & Pizarro, M. (2024). The tech gap: Barriers to women's participation in high-growth sectors. *Journal of Technological Entrepreneurship*, 12(1), 23–39..